

Total Quality Management Applied To Marketing Education Service Quality

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Although the drumbeat of TQM has been echoing for some time, it has not really permeated very far into the halls of academia. Although education is acknowledged to be a "service," there has been hesitation to use TQM methods in the academic setting (cf. Stern & Tseng 1993, Froiland 1993). Specifically while there are courses in TQM, CQS, CQI, etc., they tend to remain functional in nature, teaching tools and techniques needed to achieve quality, but lacking cross-functional or interdisciplinary approaches. Moreover, one generally does not see non-TQM classes employing TQM techniques to show their potential benefits and importance to the business world. Yet this would appear to be vital, particularly in a services context, given the major attributes of services (i.e. intangibility, perishability, standardization difficulties, etc.).

Employing TQM philosophy and tools provides business school graduates a better opportunity to transcend conventional decision making processes, which particularly equip them to deal with the complexities to be encountered in an increasingly interrelated business environment. In fact, providing this type of training addresses the four key themes Berry (1993) states marketing education needs for the future: accountability, globalism, relevancy, and versatility.

As business becomes increasingly complex, interpersonal and critical thinking skills are invaluable. Being exposed to the TQM philosophy and tools through course exercises enables students to become more productive employees after graduation, thereby helping them to establish their value to their employer. Thus, systematic implementation of TQM exercises in marketing courses, can significantly increase the probability that students will have the requisite managerial skills required for success in today's global marketplace.

This paper attempts to show how a services marketing course employed TQM concepts to increase critical thinking, marketing, and general business skills. Our hope is to demonstrate the

effectiveness of TQM tools in an educational service context. As with any service, relevance and survival are of prime importance to educational institutions. By equipping students to perform in a TQM environment, educators can increase their hiring desirability by familiarizing them with new methods (Froiland 1993, Robinson et al. 1991). Without this, decreased demand for graduates will in turn mean less need for the services of business schools and their educators (Stern & Tseng 1993). The paper is developed along four lines: (1) background regarding TQM and higher education; (2) the relationship between TQM and marketing pedagogy is presented; (3) an example of implementing a TQM term project in a services marketing course is provided; and (4) conclusions and implications are supplied.

References

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